

Haunted By The Ghost Of You by reysrose

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Flashbacks, It's a lot sweeter than it sounds ok, Multi, Nancy POV, Non-Graphic Self Harm, PTSD, Panic Attacks, Sharing a Bed, showering together

Language: English

Characters: Barbara "Barb" Holland, Jonathan Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-06

Updated: 2017-11-06

Packaged: 2022-04-02 14:40:36

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,499

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

It starts to happen in the hallway, just in front of Barb's old locker.

In which Nancy has a panic attack, and her boys worry

Title from Lord Huron's The Night We Met

Haunted By The Ghost Of You

It starts to happen in the hallway, just in front of Barb's old locker. It belongs to some freshman now, some skinny kid with curly blonde hair and glasses the size of saucers. Nancy looks at it, chokes a little, and then her chest starts to tighten and the world gets a little dull around the edges. It tilts on its side.

Suddenly, Nancy can't breathe. She knows what's happening. It's a panic attack. She gets them now, since she's seen the Upside Down. Since she's cut her own hand open to summon a monster with deadly flower petals instead of a mouth. Since she's jabbed a red hot poker in the side of Jonathan's kid brother to get what wasn't the devil but close enough out of him. Since she's seen Steve, beaten and bloody and standing protectively over her baby brother and his band of misfits. Her stomach churns. The hallways are nearly clear now, and Nancy sags against the lockers. The bell rings. Her head is too loud, too crowded.

Nancy runs.

She makes it to the girls bathroom near the gym and darts into a stall, sliding down the wall and burying her face in her shaking, knobbly knees. Her dress rides up and she's sure her underwear is visible. She crawls to the stall door and locks it. She can't breathe. She can't breathe.

She thinks of the thing Steve does when she gets like this, how he presses his palm to her chest and counts out her breath slowly for her, in for three, hold for four, out for seven. She presses her own palm to her chest and tries to do it for herself, onetwothree, onetwothreefour, onetwothreefourfivesixseven, but it doesn't work. Her hand is too small and too soft, and whenever she tries to imagine Steve's hand instead of her own all she can think of is his hands wrapped around that fucking bat, his face split open, Dustin tucked against his side and-

No, Nancy, she tells herself. She takes her hand off her chest. She's breathing so fast she can't even feel her heartbeat anymore, just a steady thrumming in her wrist and neck and head. She thinks of

Jonathan, and what he does when she gets like this, how he sits behind her so she can feel his body heat, how he braids her hair clumsily and sings Hey Jude to her until she stops shaking in his grip. She hums the first few chords of it, but her voice is too high, too thin, too reedy, and it sounds too much like the screams she lets out in her nightmares so she stops.

She tries to picture both of them, doing what they do when she gets like this at the same time, but the picture fractures in her brain. She lets out a squeak, buries her face in her chest, and lets the panic sweep over her and take her.

The waves of heat the panic attack sends over her makes her think of the ocean. She always loved the ocean, until, until-

She slams her head back into the wall once, twice, three times, hoping the pain will snap her out of the fear that's clutching her in long, dark, dripping claws, but all she succeeds in doing is giving herself a headache. She reaches back, gagging at the panic, at the pain, and her fingers come away bloody. Fuck.

The bell rings. She jumps and nearly screams. Steve has first lunch. Jonathan has first lunch. She wants them, wants to sprint out of the bathroom and tackle both of them but she can't. She can't because they'd be effectively thrown out of Hawkins and-

"Nance?"

Steve."

"Baby, you in here?"

Jonathan. She should have known they'd come look for her. She wasn't in fourth period, Jonathan must have worried, she whimpers and chokes on a sob.

"Nancy?"

She sobs again.

"Baby, the door is locked. Can you unlock the door?"

She scoots forward on her ass, across the dirty bathroom floor, and undoes the lock on the door.

Steve is on his knees in front of her in seconds, taking her into his arms. Jonathan skulks by the door, making sure nobody finds them in there with her. She clings to Steve's jacket and starts to cry, deep, guttural sobs.

"Shhh, shhh, Nance. It's ok."

"N-no!"

"Baby, talk to us."

Jonathan. Still by the door. She wants him to hold her, dammit! Her sobs become closer to shrieks.

"Nance, shhhh. Jonathan, I think we just need to get her out of her. It doesn't look like she's calming down anytime soon."

"Got it. You drive. I'll get her."

Jonathan pauses to rub a hand over the back of her head and she winces when he comes in contact with the raw patch she created against the wall

"Aw fuck, Nance."

"I-I'm SORRY!"

"No, no, it's ok, babe. It's ok."

He scoops her up, one hand under her back and the other under her knees. She slumps into him, pillowing her heavy, aching head on his shoulder. Steve grabs her backpack. She's still crying. She can't stop. Her chest aches.

"I-I'm tired."

"We know. We're gonna go home, alright? Maybe take a nap."

"Shower?"

“Sure, Nance.”

Jonathan slides into the backseat of Steve’s car with her, letting her lay her head in his lap. She shudders. She’s stopped crying. Now she’s just heavy and tired with the stress of it all.

“Close your eyes, ok? We’ll be home before you know it.”

“Byers?”

“Yeah. Mom’ll be home in a couple hours and I’ll have her call your mom and tell her you’re spending the night to work on a project, alright? That way you can sleep with me and Steve.”

“Can just sneak back over.”

“Shhh. It’s easier this way. Close your eyes, Nance.”

She does.

~

She wakes up when Steve pulls into the driveway. She feels entirely drained, like someone sucked all the blood out of her and filled her back up with cement. Jonathan lifts her from the car.

“Wanna be carried or wanna walk?”

“Mmmm.”

She doesn’t think her legs can support her weight. Jonathan scoops her up and tosses the housekey to Steve. She closes her eyes.

“Still want that shower, baby?”

“Yeah.”

Steve runs the water and Jonathan sits her on the toilet and strips his clothes off before kneeling down and untying her shoes for her, sliding them off with her ruffled socks. Steve pulls her dress over her head and unclips her bra, running his hands lightly over her bare shoulders. She clings to Jonathan’s shoulders as he takes her underwear off.

The water is warm, and she feels safe, sandwiched between them. Her back is to Jonathan's bare chest, and Steve is facing her, rubbing her wet hands. Water drips from her hair to her nose. Jonathan begins to wash her back.

"I saw Barb's locker."

"Oh?"

Jonathan has started in on her hair. Steve lifts one leg and begins to soap it up.

"Yeah. That's what set me off. I saw Barb's locker and remembered they gave it to someone else."

"Nance..."

"Why'd you slam your head into the wall?"

Jonathan isn't accusatory, just soft and concerned. Steve reaches forwards and wipes some water off the tip of her nose.

"I thought maybe the pain would ground me a little."

"Nancy, we talked about that."

"I know. Please spare me the lecture."

Steve sighs.

"Baby, we're just worried."

Her eyes fill with tears. Jonathan shuts the water off and then wraps her in a threadbare towel.

"I know. Can we go back to being worried tomorrow, though? I just want to sleep."

Steve nods. Jonathan kisses him on the mouth before leaving to find them all clothes. Nancy leans against the sink and lets Steve dry her hair.

"We love you, Nance. You know that, right?"

She nods. Jonathan pulls a sweatshirt over her head and she clings to Steve's shoulders as he slides a pair of his boxers up her legs.

She lets Steve carry her into the bedroom this time, her still damp hair in her face. He lays her down in the middle of the bed and then she's sandwiched between them. Jonathan covers her in one of Will's old Star Wars blankets, the one with the fuzzy underside, before drawing up the rest of the covers over them.

Nancy thinks that here, covered in a blanket with what Mike reminds her are X wings every time he sees her wrapped in it on it, surrounded by two of the best people she's ever met, ever kissed, is the only place she'll ever feel safe again.

To her left, Jonathan shifts so his leg is draped over her hip. Steve pillows his head in the curve of her neck and breathes her in. Nancy feels impossibly warm and impossibly sleepy. She lets her eyes drift closed.

She thinks she could be okay with that.